

NARRATIVE,
OF THE
EXTRAORDINARY ADVENTURES
OF FOUR
RUSSIAN SAILORS,

Who were cast away on the desert Island of
East-Spitzbergen, in Greenland;

An account of their shipwreck and escape, among the fields of ice; their fortunate discovery of an old hut which served them as a habitation; in what manner they furnished themselves with necessaries; their many ingenious inventions to protect them from the severities of the climate, and especially the ravages of the white bears, which, however they overcame, and eat their flesh: The unparalleled miseries they endured in this dismal situation, till they were providentially relieved by a Russian ship, on the fifteenth day of August, 1781, would exceed belief, were it not related from indisputable authority.

Printed from the account laid before the Royal Society in
LONDON.

By the celebrated JOSEPH BANKS, Esq;

To which is added, a concise description of the
ISLAND of BARBADOES.

London: Printed for Andrew Hamilton,



22
23
24
25

N

S

of

Cr

how

W

at

Mr

min

all

spo

Pro

den

for

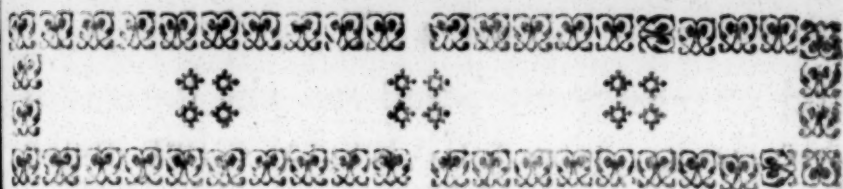
Hin

wh

rati

stad

ed i



A

NARRATIVE, &c.

SOME readers may, perhaps, consider the following recital in the same kind of light they do the History of Robinson Crusoe: the truth of these adventures is, however, sufficiently authenticated.—When these unfortunate sailors first arrived at Arch-Angel, they were examined by Mr Klinstadt, Chief Auditor of the Admiralty of that city, who minuted down all the particulars, which exactly corresponded with each account. Mr Le Loy, Professor of History in the Imperial Academy of Petersburg, some time after sent for two of the men, viz. Alexis Himkoff, Himkoff his godson, to Petersburg, from whose mouths he took the following Narrative, which also agreed with Mr Klinstadt's minutes. The original was published in the German language at Petersburg, and

and thence transmitted to the ingenious Mr Banks, who with several other members of the Royal Society, were so well pleased with the account, that they directed it to be translated as follows.

In the year 1775, one Jeremiah Okladmoff, a merchant of Meien, in the government of Arch-Angel, fitted out a vessel carrying fourteen men; she was designed for Spitzbergen, to be employed in the Whale Fishery. For eight successive days after they had sailed, the wind was fair, but on the ninth it changed; so that instead of getting the West of Spitzbergen the usual place of rendezvous for ships annually employed in the Whale Fishery, they were driven Eastward of those Islands; and after some days they found themselves at a small distance from one of them called East-Spitzbergen; having approached this island, within almost two miles, their vessel was suddenly surrounded with Ice and they found themselves in an extremely dangerous situation.

In this alarming state a council was held when the mate, Alexis Himcoff, informed them

them, that he recollected to have heard that some of the people of Meisen, some time before, having formed a resolution of wintering upon this island, and accordingly carried from that city timber proper for building a hut, and had actually erected one at some distance from the shore.

This information induced the whole company to resolve on wintering there if the hut, as they hoped, still remained; for they clearly perceived the eminent danger they were in, and that they must inevitably perish if they continued in the ship. They dispatched therefore four of their crew in search of the hut, or any other succour they could meet with. These were Alexis Hinkof, the mate; Iwan Hinkof, his godson; Stephen Scharapof, and Feodor Weregine.

As the shore on which they were to land as uninhabited, it was necessary they should make some provision for their expedition. They had almost two miles to travel over loose ridges of ice, which being raised by the waves, and driving against

against each other by the wind, rendered the way equally difficult and dangerous; providence therefore forbade them loading themselves too much, lest, being overburthened, they might sink in between the pieces of ice and perish.

Having thus maturely considered the nature of their undertaking, they provided themselves with a musket and powder-horn, containing twelve charges of powder with as many balls, an ax, a small kettle, a bag with about twenty pounds of flour, a tinder-box and tinder, a bladder fill'd with tobacco, and every man his wooden pipe. Thus accoutred, our sailors quickly arrived on the island, little suspecting what would befall them.

They began with exploring the country; and soon discovered the hut they were in search of, about a mile and a half from the shore. It was thirty-six feet in length, eighteen feet in height, and many in breadth. It contained a small anti-chamber, about twelve feet broad which had two doors, the one to shut from

from the outer air, the other to form a communication with the inner room; this contributed greatly to keep the larger room warm when once heated. In the large room was an earthen stove, constructed in the Russian manner; that is a kind of oven without a chimney, which serves occasionally either for baking, for heating the room, or, is customary among the Russian peasants, in very cold weather, for a place to sleep upon.

The reader must not be surprized at my mentioning a room without a chimney; for the houses inhabited by the lower class of people in Russia are seldom built otherwise. When a fire is kindled in one of those stoves, the room, as well may be supposed, is filled with smoke; to give vent to which, the door and three or four windows are opened. These windows are each a foot in height, and about six inches wide; they are cut out of the beams whereof the house is built, and by means of a sliding board, they may, when occasion requires it, be shut very close. When therefore a fire is made in the stove, the smoke descends no lower than the windows

windows, through which, or through the door, it finds a vent, according to the directions of the wind, and persons may continue in the room without feeling any great convenience from it. The reader will readily conjecture that the upper part of such a place, between the windows and the ceiling, must be as black as ebony; but from the windows down to the floor, the wood is perfectly clean, and retains its natural colour.

They rejoiced greatly at having discovered the hut, which had, however, suffered much from the weather, it having now been built a considerable time; our adventurers however contrived to pass the night in it. Early next morning they hastened to shore, impatient to inform their comrades of their success; and also to procure from their vessel such provisions, ammunition and other necessaries, as might better enable them to winter on the island.

I leave the readers to imagine the astonishment and agony of mind those poor people must have felt, when on reaching the place of their landing, they saw nothing

thing but an open sea, free from the ice which, but a day before had covered the ocean. A violent storm which had arisen during the night, had certainly been the cause of this disastrous event. But they could not tell whether the ice which had before hemmed in the vessel, agitated by the violence of the waves, had been driven against her, and shattered her to pieces; or whether she had been carried by the current into the main: a circumstance which frequently happens in those seas. Whatever accident had befallen the ship, they saw her no more, and as no tidings were ever afterwards received of her, it is most probable that she sunk, and that all on board of her perished.

This melancholy event depriving the unhappy wretches of all hope of ever being able to quit the Island, they returned to the hut from whence they had come, full of horror and despair.

Their first attention was employed, as may easily be imagined, in devising means of providing subsistence, and for repairing their hut. The twelve charges of powder

der they had brought with them, soon procured them as many rein deer; the Island fortunately abounding in those animals.

I have before observed, that the hut which the sailors was so fortunate as to find, had sustained some damage, and it was this; there were cracks in many places between the boards of the building, which freely admitted the air. This inconvenience was, however easily remedied, as they had an ax, and the beams were still sound, (for wood in those cold climates continues through a length of years unimpaired by worms or decay) so it was easy for them to make the boards join again very tolerably; besides moss growing in great abundance all over the Island, there was more than sufficient to stop the crevices, which wooden houses must always be liable to.

Repairs of this kind cost the unhappy men the least trouble as they were Russians, for all Russian peasants are known to be
good

good carpenters; they build their own houses and are very expert in handling the axe.

The intense cold which make those climates habitable to few species of animals renders them equally unfit for the production of vegetables. No species of tree, or even shrub, are found on any of the Islands, of Spitzbergen; a circumstance of the most alarming nature to Sailors. Without fire it was impossible to resist the rigour of the climate; and without wood, how was that fire to be produced or supported? Providence however so ordered it, that in this particular, the sea supplies the defect of the land.

In wandering along the beach they collected plenty of wood, which had been driven ashore by the waves; and which at first consisted of the wrecks of ships, and afterwards of whole trees with their roots, the produce of some more hospitable, but to them unknown climate, which the overflowing of rivers, or other accidents had sent into the Ocean. This will

no

not appear incredible to those who have perused the journals of the several navigators who have been forced to winter in Nova Zembla, or any other country in a still more northern latitude.

Nothing proved of more essential service to the unfortunate men, during the first year of their exile, than some boards they found upon the beach, having a long iron hook, some nails of about five or six inches long, and proportionably thick, and other bits of iron fixed in them; the melancholy relicks of some vessels cast away in those remote parts. These were thrown ashore by the waves, at a time when the want of powder gave our men reason to apprehend that they must fall a prey to hunger, as they had nearly consumed those rein-deer they had killed. This lucky circumstance was attended with another equally fortunate; they found on the shore a root of a fir-tree, which nearly approached the figure of a bow.

As

As necessity has ever been the mother of invention, so they soon fashioned this root to a good bow, by the help of a knife, but still wanted a string and arrows.

Not knowing how to procure these at present, they resolved upon making a couple of lances to defend themselves against the white bears, by far the most ferocious of their kind, whose attacks they had great reason to dread.

Finding they could neither make the heads of lances nor of their arrows without the help of a hammer, they contrived to form the large iron hook mentioned above into one, by heating it, and widening a hole it happened to have about its middle, with the help of one of their largest nails; This received the handle, and a round button at one end of the hook, served for the face of the hammer. A large pebble supplied the place of an anvil; and a couple of rein-deers horns made the tongs.

By

By the means of such tools, they made two heads of spears; and after polishing and sharpening them with stones, they tied them as fast as possible with thongs made of rein-deer skins, to sticks about the thickness of a man's arm, which they got from some branches of trees that had been cast on shore.

Thus equipped with spears, they resolved to attack a white bear; and after a most dangerous encounter, they killed the formidable creature, and thereby made a new supply of provisions. the flesh of this animal they relished exceedingly, as they thought it much resembled beef in taste and flavour. The tendons they saw with much pleasure could, with little or no trouble be divided into filiments of what fineness they thought fit. This perhaps was the most fortunate discovery these men could have made, for besides other advantages which will be after-mentioned, they were hereby furnished with strings for their bows.

The success of our unfortunate islanders in making the spears, and the use these proved of, encouraged them to proceed, and to forge some pieces of iron into heads of arrows to the same shape, though some what smaller in size than the spears above mentioned. Having ground and sharpened these like the former, they tied them with the sinews of the white bears, to pieces of fir, to which, by the help of fine threads of the same, they fastened feathers of sea fowl, and thus became possessed of a complete bow and arrows. Their ingenuity in this respect, was crowned with success, far beyond their expectation; for during the time of their continuance upon the island, with these arrows they had killed no less than two hundred and fifty rein-deers, besides a great number of blue and white foxes.

The flesh of these animals served them also for food, and other necessary preservatives against the intense coldness of a climate so near the pole.

They

They killed, however, only ten white bears in all, and that not without the utmost danger; for those animals being prodigiously strong, defended themselves with astonishing vigour and fury. The first our men attacked designedly; the other nine they slew in defending themselves from their assaults; for some of these creatures even ventured to enter the outer room of their hut, in order to devour them.

A repetition, however, of these ferocious attacks, threw the poor men into great terror and anxiety, as they were in almost a perpetual danger of being devoured.

The three different kinds of animals above-mentioned, viz. The rein-deer, the blue and white foxes, and the white bears, were the only food these wretched mariners tasted during their continuance in this dreary abode.

We do not at once see every resource. It is generally necessity that quickens our invention, opening by degrees our eyes,

and

and pointing out expedients which otherwise might have occurred to our thoughts. The truth of this observation our four sailors experienced in various instances. They were for some time reduced to the necessity of eating their meat raw, and without either bread or salt, for they were quite destitute of both.

The intemperance of the cold, together with the want of proper conveniences, prevented them from cooking their victuals in a proper manner. There was but one stove in the hut, and that being set up agreeable to the Russian taste, was more like an oven, and consequently not well adapted for boiling any thing. Wood also was too precious a commodity to be wasted in keeping up too fires; and the one they might have made out of their habitation, to dress their victuals, would in no way serve to warm them. Another reason against cooking in the open air, was the continual danger of an attack from the white bears. And here I must observe, that suppose they had made

the attempt, it would still have been practicable only for some part of the year for the cold, which in such a climate, scarcely ever abates from the absence of the sun during six tedious months; the inconceivable quantity of snow which is constantly falling through the greatest part of the winter, together with the unceasing rains at certain seasons; all these were insurmountable obstacles to that expedient.

To remedy therefore, in some degree, the hardship of eating their meat half raw, they bethought themselves of drying some of their provisions during the summer, in the open air, and afterward of hanging it up in the upper part of their hut which, as mentioned before, and was always continually filled with smoke, down to the windows: it was thus dried thoroughly by the help of that smoke. This meat, so prepared, they used for bread, and it made them relish their other flesh the better, as they could only half dress it. Finding this experiment answer in every

respect

respect their wishes they continued to practice it during the whole time of their confinement upon the island, and always kept up by that means, a sufficient stock of provisions.

In this critical juncture, let us take a view of these destitute christians; famine in a manner still continued their door-keeper, while cold almost froze up the passage of life in every vein, their misery was likewise augmented to a great degree, from the dreadful apprehensions of falling a prey to the fatal ravages of wild beasts; which repeatedly encompassed their little hut

In this deplorable condition, the Almighty distributor of earthly events, caused hope once more to revive within them; who can imagine the extacy with which their breasts were filled on beholding a ship making for the land. Anxiety here displayed its powers, their very souls breathed forth in gales, to bring their long-wished for visitants safe on shore; the only object for their delivery, which was accomplished on the 29th of August,

1781; the ship proved to be a Russian, drove out of her course by a strong gale of wind; they were then taken on board the vessel, and safe conducted to their own country.



Description of the
Island of BARBADOES.

THIS famous island is not only one of the chief of the Carribbees, and most considerable, (except Jamaica) of all the British islands in America, but was the first settled and mother of our sugar colonies. It is situated in 59 degrees West longitude, and 15 degrees North latitude, and the most easterly on all the winward Islands; 90 miles South-East of Martinico, nearly the same from Grenada, 60 East of St Vincent, 80 from St Lucia 23 miles long, and 15 broad; computed in the whole to contain 140 square miles.

The

This island, when the English some time after the year 1625. first landed, was found the most destitute place imaginable. There was no kind of beasts, pasture, or prey: yet as the climate was good, and the soil appeared fertile, some gentlemen of small fortune in England, resolved to become adventurers thither. The trees were so large, and of a wood so hard and stubborn, that it was with great difficulty they could clear as much ground as was necessary for their subsistence. By unremitting perseverance, however, they brought it to yield them a tolerable support; and they found that *cotton* and *indigo* agreed well with the soil, and that the *tobacco*, which was beginning to come into repute in *England* answered tolerably. These prospects, together with the storm between the King and Parliament, which was beginning to break out in *England*, induced many new adventurers to transport themselves into this island. And what is extremely remarkable, so great was the increase of people in *Barbadoes*, 25 years after its first settlement,

that

that in 1650, it contained more than 50,000 whites, and a much more greater number of negro and indian slaves; the latter they required by means not at all to their honour; for they seized upon all those unhappy men, without any pretence, in the neighbouring islands, and carried them into slavery. A practice, which has rendered the Caribbee Indians irreconcilable to us ever since. They had begun a little before this to cultivate sugar, which soon rendered them extremely wealthy. The number of slaves, therefore, was still augmented; and in 1676, it is supposed, that their number amounted to 100,000, which, together with 50,000, make 150,000, on this small spot; a degree of population unknown in Holland, China, or any other part of the world, most renowned for numbers. At this time *Barbadoes* employed 400 sail of ships, one with another, of 151 tons, in their trade. Their annual exports in sugar, indigo, ginger, cotton, citron-water, was above 350,000*l* and their circulating cash at home was 200,000*l*. Such was the increase of population, trade and wealth,
in

in the course of 50 years. But since that time this Island has been much on the decline, which is to be attributed partly to the growth of the French colonies, and partly to our own establishments in the neighbouring isls. The numbers at present are said to be 20,000 whites, and 100,000 slaves.

Various sorts of curious trees are found here among which are the royal palmetto, and less palmetto. The latter grows 50 feet high; the former (which is one of the most stately trees in the creation) is about 70 feet high at twelve years growth, 180 at 40 years, and at 100 years (when it is in perfection) it is 300 feet high, though but 3 in diameter. The bush or head is 80 feet round, the leaves 18 feet long; and yet the roots are no bigger than swan quills, nor the fruit than French grapes.

The Barbadians used formerly to trade with Virginia for lumber, bread, indian corn, and other provision; with Guinea, for negroes; with Maderia, for wine; with Fayol, for brandy; with the isles of May and Curassaw, for salt; with Ireland, for beef and pork; and all other goods they
have

have from England. The voyage is generally 5 or 6 weeks outward bound, and 6 or seven homeward.

They are subject to hurricans in July and August; but not so much as in the other Caribbees; and it is the most healthy island of any in those parts because, unless when there is a hurrican, they have always the advantage of an easterly wind, commonly called the trade wind

The sugar that is brought to England from hence, is much whiter and finer than that of any other plantation; and they have one particular production, called Barbadoes tar, which rises out of the earth, and swims upon the surface of the water. It is of great use in the dry belly-ach, and in diseases of the breast.

The capital is Bridge-town on the South-West coast of the Island, where the Governor resides, whose office is said to be worth 5000l. per annum.

10 JU 52
F. I N I S.

